

Corrections officers awarded for bravery, work

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The state Office of Corrections Services presented its Distinguished Service Award to Dixon Correctional Institute Sgt. Sherrika Bennett for her actions when she was attacked by an inmate in March 2007.

Corrections Secretary James M. LeBlanc presented the award to Bennett before more than 200 employees and family members during the department's annual Memorial Service and Awards Ceremony on Thursday.

The award recognizes employees who act courageously to protect life or property during a work-related emergency situation, according to a news release.

A 70-year-old inmate was accused of attacking Bennett in a prison canteen. According to records in the case, the inmate received an additional eight-year sentence in September for the attack.

Bennett was credited with maintaining her composure and fighting off the attack until she could put out a call for help on her radio, LeBlanc said last year.

Other employees recognized in the ceremony included:

- Correctional Officer of the Year, Master Sgt. Jimmie Brumfield, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center.
- Support Employee of the Year, Account Manager Melaine Curry, Prison Enterprises.
- Non-Security Supervisor of the Year, Health Information Director Kelley Hawkins, Louisiana State Penitentiary
- Security Supervisor of the Year, Bobby Lee, Probation and Parole, Lafayette District.
- Probation and Parole Officer of the Year, Beth McGee, Lake Charles District.

The Secretary's Award of Excellence, which distinguishes those employees who provide a major benefit to the department and its overall public safety mission, was given to:

- Captain Clifton Chaney, Dixon Correctional Institute, who has led the offender work crews at the State Capitol for 20 years.

-- Deputy Warden Helen Travis, Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, who leads LCIW's consolidation of services effort with Hunt Correctional Center and who is a pioneer among female security officers.

-- Assistant Warden Jolene Constance, C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center, for her efforts to promote social and literacy programs for successful offender re-entry and strengthening family bonds between offenders and children.

-- Gerald Lebo, Rayburn Correctional Center, for his technical and computer skills that have streamlined reporting requirements and standardized programming for all institutions.

-- Michael Wynne, Alexandria Probation and Parole District, for his tenacity in pursuing housing and other services for released sex offenders "in a time when there is so much scrutiny of sex offenders in the community — all the while maintaining public safety."

The memorial service paid tribute to the eight correctional and probation and parole officers killed in the line of duty during the department's history, as well as 31 employees or retirees who died during 2007.